

[Luther C. Hart]

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Gauthier. Sheldon F. [52?]

Rangelore.

Tarrant Co., Dist[,.?] 7

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[Luther?] C. Hart, [55?,] living at 1405 [Waterman?] St. Fort Worth, Texas, was born at his father's farm Mar. 16, 1884. His father, John C. Hart, then owned a farm and ranch located in Williamson Co. Texas. Hart farmed a small tract of fenced land and his cattle ranged on open range.

Father learned to ride at an early age and at the age of 12 he began to ride the range. He continued working on his father's ranch till he was 20 years old. He then secured work with the 'Half Circle J' which was owned by [Hardy?] Watson.

The 'Half Circle J' was located in Clay Co. Texas. He quit the 'Half Circle J' in 1906 and went to Andrew [Co?] Texas and there worked for the Carter Carver ranch. During the period he worked on the Carter Carver Ranch he experienced a great deal of trouble with cattle [that?] became addicted to the loco weed (arggullu). He quit the range in 1808 and since has engaged in stock farming.

His story of range life follows:

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" I was born in Williamson Co. Texas Mar. 16, 1884, at my [father's?] farm. My father's name was John C. Hart, and he cultivated land, also ranged cattle. His herd averaged around 1000 head and he branded with the outline of a heart [thus?]: .

"The cattle grazed on an open range, as all cattle did there in the 80's. Our adjacent ranch neighbors were the Purcell's Cambell's and [Heeman's?] outfits. All of the herds averaged around 1000. Some herds numbered [lo?] as 250 and a few up to 1500. We were what then was called grease-pot outfits.

"Prior to the 80's there a number of large ranches in Williamson Co. but they had moved further West.

"I [learned?] to ride a hoss at an early age. About the first thing father tried to teach me was to ride a hoss, and how to handle one. When I was 12 years old I started to help look after the herd, except for the short periods that I went to school. At the age of 14 I was doing the [work?] of a regular hand. Perhaps not so well as a man, but was filling in nearly up to [sbuff?]. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 Of course, I [couldn't?] rope, bullgod and ride equal to a man, which would be unreasonable to expect, but I was considered better than the average kid. I was larger than the average run of buckaroos of my age. I am today above the average man in size. I am a [triffle?] over six [foot?] three inches tall and weigh 230 pounds, and its all bone and muscle. I was 16 years old before I could stay with a pitching hoss tolerable well. I never did any wrangling till I was 17 years old.

"I tried to wrangle critters when I was 14 and 15 years old, but I was put into the air high enough for birds to build nest in my pockets, in face of the fact that I was strong as a young steer breaking through a fence going to a corn patch.

"The Hart family, with the exception of a couple extra hands during the roundup, looked after our herd. I had two older borthers and [we?] did most of the [work?] after I [was?] old enough to ride. About all we did was ride the range keeping our eyes on the critters. All of

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the riders working for the other outfits did the same thing, that is we worked together and each waddy would give attention to the other fellow critter, if he met up [with?] one [that?] [needed?] it. In other words all the outfits treated [the?] cattle as though it was their critters.

“At the time I started to work my father couldn't afford to hire help, because the prices of cattle was too low. A panic hit around 1893 [and?] at one time, around 94-5, one couldn't give cattle away. Every one had to many cattle, especially if one had to hire help to look after the herds.

“We looked after our herd and the cattle increased in numbers 3 steadily. Father calculated that there would be an end to the panic and low prices. After about five years things changed for the better and we then had the cattle.

“During the spring roundup all the outfits that ranged critters in that section united into one crew and the roundup was did as if the critters belonged to one man. Some one of the various crews would be appointed as the roundup boss. As the critters were gathered, the different brands would be separated into one bunch. The cattle would be branded and counted and then turned loose on their respective grazing grounds. By fall the critters would be again mixed to a great extent and then another roundup was held to separated the animals.

“We never had enough critters at one time, which we had ready for the [market?], to make up a paying driving herd. Therefore, [father?] sold most of his cattle to cattle buyers that came [through?] the country, or he would throw in with some drover and put his critters in the drovers herd. After the [criters?] were sold settlement was made.

I didn't get into to real ranch work until 1904 at which time I joined up with the 'Half Circle J', so named because the brand was made thus: J'. The outfit [was?] owned by Hardy Watson and his camp was located near Shamrock, Wheeler, Co. Texas.

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"The 'Half Circle J' outfit run better than 15000 head of cattle and 400 head of hosses. There was a crew of seven hands besides the two sons of Watson. Jim Watson was the top-screw and Jack was the belly-cheater.

"The cattle grazed on a fenced range and were herfords and blackpolls. 4 "We lived well while on the home ranch. The chuck was the best and we had plenty varity of well cooked grub. As unsual on a cow outfit, beef was the main meat dish, but Watson backed that up with lots of canned vegetables and there was always something to satisfy our sweet tooth.

"We had night riding to do on the 'Half Circle J', not because it was necessary to hold the herd, but becuase of the rustlers. It was necessary to have someone watching the herd constantly, so one or two men stayed with the critters [during?] the night. During the day the work was divided among various crews. The fence riders had a certain number of miles to travel each day going over the fence looking for breaks. All breaks were reported to the repair crew that went to the reported spots and did the repairing. There were the men that attended to the sick and injured critters, which were constantly showing up.

"The grass would become mighty short with the approach of winter and then we drifted the herd into Okla. and herd the animals in the Arbuckle Mountain district. There we had [no?] fence and it was necssary to [do?] line riding at all hours [to?] keep the animals bunched. There is where I got real early day cow work. We lived in the open while [i?] the Arbuckle Mountain district. We moved our camp from time to time, that was necessary to keep the herd on good grazing grounds. Thus, during the winter months we lived behind the chuck wagon, lining our flue [squatted?] on [our?] haunches and doing our [sleeping?] rolled in a blanket. When it rained or snowed, we threw a slicker aver the blanket. Many mornings I have awaked to find encased in a shell of ice, but I would warm as toast. After 5 ice forms one became warm, because once the ice formed then the air and wind would be excluded and the heat form the body was held within the shell. I never had a cold and felt like a two year old mule colt allthe time I was in the Arbuckle Mountain district.

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"Our hardest job was keeping the critters from drifting when a storm was drifting our way. Two or three days before a storm hit the animals would become restless and hanker to get some where else. Occasionally we would have a stampede, but the herford critters are not much for running and we never had a great deal of trouble to check a stomp.

"The land where we herded our critters was Indian land and the Indians looked to us for their [woha?]", which was the Indian word for beef. Watson's rule was to give the Indian beef in reasonable amounts. He reasoned that the Indian would get beef one way or another and [that?] it would be cheaper for us to give than fight the Indians to [keep?] them away from the herd. The Indians would call about once each week and pick out a yearling or two and then go their way.

"Just as the spring grass got up in good shape, we would drift the herd back to the home ranch.

"The spring branding of calves took place during April and then we had a busy time for a few weeks. Also, the hosses were branded during the spring.

"The cattle which [were?] sold, was shipped by rail to Fort Worth and the Kansas City [markets?]. [When?] a shippment was made waddies went with the cattle. The waddies' work was watching the critters to see that none got down and be stomped to death. If a critter once got down in a packed car, it would not be able to get up because of the crowding by the other animals. As a rule no critter would 6 get down unless it became sick. [Every?] time the train stopped the bull [nurses?] would look over the cars [of?] cattle and give the critters what [attention?] was necessary.

"In additon to the cattle work we had considerable hoss work to do. The hosses that were to be sold were wrangled and broke to [the?] saddle. The wrangling was done by all the crew, as everyone was a hoss buster. [?] ever, Jim Watson was the top wrangler. He had

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hoss busting down to a nat's eye and could bust a critter quicker than any man I ever saw at [the?] work.

"There were many waddies that could do a pert job of busting. The difference was in the neatness and quickness that some could do the job. Jim Watson was one of the fellows that could bring a hoss to thaw pronto. He could ride 'em with or without a saddle. The hosses on the 'Half Circle J' were not so wild, because they ranged within a [fence?] and [we?] had contact with the animals a great deal, thus we did not have any real tough aniamls to deal with.

"I quit the 'Half Circle J' in 1906 and went to Andrews Co. Texas, N. of Midland. There I went to work for Clarence Carver. He had a cow camp in Midland Co. located on the [ecos?] River and one in [Andrews?] Co. where I worked, which was located in [the?] Comcho draw section. Carver' brand was 'CC' and he ranged around 15,000 head

"Some of the range was fenced, but a large number of the critters run on the open range.

"I did fence riding most of the time while with the 'CC' outfit and recived \$30. per month which was ct\$[?]. more than I received with the 'Half Circle J' outfit. Night riding was not done except when the critters showed a tendency to drift. The cattle [of?] the 'CC' range was wilder stock than those on the 'Half Circle J'[,?] because 7 they were a mixed breed, having lot of longhorn blood.

"We lived [allot?] behind the chuck wagon and as on the 'Half Circle J' the chuck was a-one.

"The top-screw for the Concho [Draw?] camp of the 'CC' was Odd Frances, [no?] sheriff of Midland Co. and William Schney, Red [Hoods?], Bill Allen and [Peg?] [Zeg?], the [belly?]-cheater, were in the crew.

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"[On?] the 'CC' outfit was where I learned my lesson about the loco weed (Aragullus). Until then, I had just 'heard about it, because I had not been in a country where the weed grew. It grew in many sections of W. Texas and the Andrews Co. section was one of the sections.

"The weed stays green in the winter time, after other vegetation turns brown. Naturally, the critters hankers for green food and will eat loco weed. When once the animals [starts?], and gets enough so the weed gets a hold, all the powers of Hades can't stop the critter from eating the weed and will starve to death hunting for it. The animal will stay on a hunt for loco weed till it drops for the need of food and water. I have seen a [locoed?] critter driven into water, after being famished for it, then kill itself by drinking too much. But, hungry as it may be, one can drive the critter into the most succulent grass and nary a bite will the animal eat.

"[When?] once a critter get a good start on the weed, there is only one way to stop [such?] animal [from?] eating it and that is by killing the beast.

"A well locoed animal is unmanageable. It [gets?] wild from the [carving?] for the weed and sees things topsy-turvy.

"To give some idea of the job a person has trying to handle a locoed critter, I shall prattle about a few of the things I met up 8 dealing with locoed critters.

"When I first [hit?] on the 'CC' I didn't know how to spot a locoed critter that just had a touch of the weed, but soon learned [to?] watch the animals eyes and look at [the?] pupils. The pupils would show various stages of contraction, depending on the amount of the weed/ that and been eaten by the critter, and contraction was the first sign to [show?]. Finally the animal will stare and have a far-away look and later it will will become restless, keeping on the move, of course, hunting for the weed. It to impossible to hold a locoed critter with a bunch of cattle, unless one stays on top of the critter every minute and when

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they are real bad all Hades can't hold the critter. The last stages of the animals conditions is the losing of weight and then death.

"I saddled a hoss on morning for a drag across the range to do some fence riding. I was [jogging?] along at a fair rate of speed and came to a spot where there were several gopher mounts. Usually, a hoss will take an extra long strid or a short one to keep from stepping on the mount, but this hoss made a leap as though he was clearing a high bank. The leap caught me off my guard and I hit the gound, but held onto the reins. I never reckoned that the hoss was leaping to clear the mound, but thought that it was one of its fancy tricks, because the cowpony had the habit of [pitching?] unexpectedly. They seemed to want to [let?] the rider know that it could [pitch?] [and?] would suddenly stop a and do a little pitching then go on. I mounted again and started on [my?] way, and soon came to another mound. The critter [made?] another flying [leap?], but that time I was on my guard and stayed in the saddle. After the second jump I surmised 9 that was the hoss's way of missing a gopher hole and mound. Sure enough the next [mount?] we came to he made his leap.

"Finally I came to a gap in [a?] fence, with the wire laying on the ground, and I never thought for a moment that the hoss would do anything but step over the wire. The hoss made his famous leap going over that wired and went high enough to clear a ten foot fence. That jump again caught me off guard and I hit the ground, but that was the last spell, because from then on I was ready for anything from that critter.

"When I returned to the camp I told Odd Frances about the peculiar habit of the hoss and he replied by saying, 'habit, hell, that hoss has a touch of loco'. We took a look at the critter's eyes and its pupils were contracted. Odd ordered the hoss tethered with [feed?] put before it. The hose was kept tethered for a week or ten days. I learned that if a critter is handled at the first when it gets a touch of the weed, it can be saved.

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"Odd instructed me, about what the older hands knew, regarding the need to keep a watch for locoed critters. [With?] our hosses that could be done, out with the cattle it was impossible to keep our eye out for contracted [pupils?] and we could not spot a loco untill the critter was too far [gone?]. The only/ /way we could catch the cattle at the start of their [loco?] eating was by looking at each of the [thousands?] that were [grazing?], and we could not spend that tim

"When we gathered [critters?] for the market we would cut out all the locos that we spotted, but there were times when the locos didn't show up till we had the herd in the pen at Midland. It was a five day drift from out ranch to the Midland [pen?]. There we loaded the critters into cars for shipment to the fort Worth market. 10 By the time we hit the pens, the craving for the weed would be at high pitch in the animals that had a good start on the weed. On several occasions we got a number of critters into the pen before we noticed the animals and had a [pert?] time before we could get the critters out. The range critter is naturally fretful when put into a pen and when several locos get to cutting up among a pen of critters something is sure to happen. Well, on each occasion that we got the locos into the pen, the critters [broke?] the [pen?] fence fighting to get out.

"A locoed critter will fight the devil to get through a fence and [break?] out of a pen, but the Devil can't drive it out. The animal will fight a man and hoss till it drops. We had to turn all the critters out of the pen in order to get at the locoed beast.

"One of the most troublesome stampedes I ever [worked?] with was caused by a couple locos in the herd. It happened with a herd being driven to the [pensaand?] the herd stampeded just as we arrived. The two locos went hay-wire and that started the whole herd on the run. The pens were [?] town and the critters lit out towards [Midland?]. The herd hit the town in high-rear and the buildings caused them to split in all directions.

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"In town the animals became more excited than ever and were running hilter-skitler. The town [folks?] hit for shelter, pronto. They just turned the town over to the animals and we cowhands.

"There was one scene I can see plainly to this day and it tickles my innards every time I recall it. We Waddies were [lost?] to know just how we should go about getting the critters out of town, but we were doing our best to clear the streets of the steers. 11 I was riding to head off a bunch that were coming into the main stem on a dead run. Just as the bunch rounded a corner, a woman who was loaded down with a ton of leaf lard around her ribs and hips came waddling up to the corner. She had an arm full of bundles, and when the steers saw me riding head on towards them, or it may have been her the animals looked at, a couple of the critters let out a snort. At some moment the snorts sounded the womans hands went up in the air and her bundles dropped to the ground. [She?] let out a yell and turned to run, but stumbled and fell. I rode betewwn that bundle of leaf lard and the snorting steers just in time to head the animals around the woman.

"After six hours or so we got the animals under control and into the pen, minus the locos which were shot.

"It was against the law to ship a loco, so we always had to look the critters over carefully while loading the animals.

"One more word about a loco hoss and that is this. A hoss with a touch of the weed will work till it drops without faltering.

"I remained with the 'CC' outfit for two years and then quit to go farming, but my farming has been stock farming.